

Thou art not conquer'd; beauty's ensign yet
Is crimson in thy lips, and in thy cheeks,
And death's pale flag is not advanced there....
Why art thou yet so fair? Shall I believe
That unsubstantial death is amorous;
And that the lean abhorred monster keeps
Thee here in dark to be his paramour?
(*Romeo and Juliet* V iii, 92–96, 102–105)

Conclusion

In this essay, I have endeavored to find common ground between the worlds of Shakespeare and clinical medicine to offer practitioners a fresh perspective. Interested readers are encouraged to refer to Shakespeare's plays to restore his thoughts to their original context. Understanding and responding to the emotional state of dying patients is important because psychosocial factors can influence the prognosis and especially the quality of life.²³ Therefore, "open communication, an empathetic spirit, and a desire to be helpful"^{2(p235)} are appropriate goals as we work with patients and families. At the same time, it is well to remember that the healing power of medicine must ultimately succumb to mortality and that dying patients need our honesty and respect at least as much as impersonal technological interposition.

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ERRATUM

In the May 1998 issue, the title page for the "Final Report of the Commission on the Future of Medical Education"¹ was omitted from the final publication. The names of the authors of the report, Charles B. Wilson, MD, MSHA, Senior Associate to the President, and Arlyss L. Anderson, RN, MS, PNP, University of California, San Francisco, should have been included.

REFERENCE

1. Wilson CB, Anderson AL. Final Report of the UC Commission on the Future of Medical Education. *West J Med* 1998 May; 168:445–482